

What is claimed is:

- Sub A1* →
1. A method of producing an exterior body panel for use on automotive vehicles, comprising:
    - providing a decorative layer;
    - forming a laminate by providing a thermoplastic material on a top side and on a bottom side of the decorative layer, at least one of the top side and bottom side being substantially transparent;
    - heating the laminate;
    - conforming the laminate into a desired shape;
    - cooling the laminate.
  2. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the decorative layer is flexible.
  3. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the laminate is pressed in vacuum molding die machine comprising an upper die and a lower die.
  4. The method as set forth in claim 3, wherein a vacuum conforms the laminate to one of the upper die and the lower die.
  5. A method of making vacuum formed exterior body panels, comprising:
    - providing a layer of decorative material;
    - depositing one side of the decorative material a mixture of epoxy and resin which when cured forms a plastic layer that is substantially transparent;
    - depositing on an opposite side of the decorative material a mixture of epoxy and resin which when cured forms a plastic layer;
    - heating the decorative material and the plastic layers;
    - pressing the decorative material, the top plastic layer and the bottom plastic layer in a vacuum mold to form a laminate; and
    - cooling the pressed laminate.
  6. The method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the layer of decorative material is flexible.

7. The method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the vacuum mold comprises an upper die and a lower die.
8. The method as set forth in claim 5, further comprising removing air from the vacuum mold in forming the molded laminate.
9. An exterior body panel for use on automotive vehicles, comprising:  
a substantially transparent outer layer;  
an inner layer; and  
a decorative layer sandwiched between the outer layer and the inner layer.
10. The exterior body panel of claim 9, wherein the decorative material is flexible.
11. The exterior body panel of claim 10, wherein said decorative layer is selected from a group including fabric, wire mesh, plastic screening, colored plastic and fiberglass.

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